



**Urgent call on UNHCR to offer protection to LGBTQ+ refugees experiencing brutal attacks in Kakuma Refugee camp**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Feb. 18, 2021.** On the eve of a long overdue dialogue meeting between the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Block 13, the highest concentration of LGBTQ+ refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp, we call upon the camp management and UNHCR to evacuate all LGBTQ+ individuals from the camp to safety in order to save their lives. In the immediate term, we propose moving the targeted Block 13 to a relatively safe facility within the camp; the largely vacant, fenced and guarded transit center, a few meters from Block 13 would be a good place to start.

These injustices to the LGBTQ+ refugee community in Kakuma have been ongoing for a long time, beginning in 2014. A new spate of violence broke out in June 2020, and has been ongoing since. The most recent examples include:

- January 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2021 saw three brutal attacks on different members of this LGBTQ+ community which included beating, slashing, rape, and fire, leaving the survivors nursing life-threatening injuries. One was a victim in two of these attacks.
- On 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the shelter where the children were sleeping was attacked. Mothers and babies were forced to run and hide in a ruined shelter off the compound. Intruders invaded and stole the children's bedding, while their comrades surrounded and stoned the rest of the LGBTQ+ individuals at Block 13.
- The following day, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2021, a three-month-old baby, carried on her mother's back, was hit with a stone and injured during yet another stoning attack. Ambulances often refuse to come to Block 13 and twice the police were asked to transport the

injured infant to the clinic and refused to do so. These horrific events are neither new, nor uncommon.

- On the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021, four gay men were set ablaze in their bedding as they slept in the open yard where they have no shelter. Three were rushed to hospital, seriously burned. This came at the end of a weekend of back-to-back attacks, where LGBT+ refugees were surrounded and stoned for several hours two days before the fire attack.
- Last night, three gay men were hit on the head and chin, people threw stones, tensions were high, some of the women and children fled and hid some distance away.

LGBTQ+ refugees on block 13 in Kakuma refugee Camp experience frequent, vicious attacks from fellow refugees and the community around them. Women are sexually assaulted and raped. Physical and sexual violence are a daily occurrence on this block.

It is within the mandate of UNHCR to protect all refugees and to work with host governments to ensure that the basic human rights of all refugees are protected, promoted and respected.

We urge UNHCR to take this crisis seriously and to take all members of Block 13 to a temporary safe place as they await evacuation from a clearly highly homophobic camp.

**For More information:**

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